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House Panel Calls C.I.A. Manual Illegal

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 5 — The House Intelligence Committee concluded today that the Central Intelligence Agency's guerrilla warfare manual for Nicaraguan rebels violated the law because it advised the rebels on how to overthrow the Sandinista Government.

But the committee, completing a two-month investigation of the manual, did not recommend specific actions against C.I.A. employees. That conclusion caused dissension, committee members said.

"At least 7 or 8 times in the manual, there is a reference to overthrowing the Sandinistas," said Representative Edward P. Boland, the Massachusetts Democrat who is the committee's chairman. "It was the opinion of the vast majority of the committee that there was a violation of the Boland Amendment."

That 1982 amendment forbids American personnel to participate in any effort to overthrow the Nicaraguan Government, but it carries no penalties.

Mr. Boland also said the manual was the result of "extremely poor management." He added that "I just can't understand why this manual wasn't read by someone in headquarters or someone in the field who would have realized" that it violated the law.

The committee is dominated by Democrats, although committee members said some Republicans agreed with the conclusion. The committee did not release its vote, as is its custom.

A committee statement issued today called the manual "repugnant" and an "embarrassment to the United States."

For those reasons and others, committee members said, there was dissension over the decision not to recommend disciplinary actions against senior agency officials.

After the C.I.A.'s inspector general completed his investigation of the manual last month, he recommended that several mid-level agency officers be reprimanded. President Reagan endorsed that finding.

Today Mr. Boland said, "I think the inspector general's report was a fair one." But one member of the committee, Representative Wyche Fowler Jr., a Georgia Democrat, said "there were mixed feelings about that" among members of committee.

'Scapegoats' Perceived

Another committee member, Representative Norman Y. Mineta, Democrat of California, said the mid-level employees who were reprimanded "were scapegoats." He said other senior officials should have been disciplined, too. He said he had urged the committee to turn its investigative report over to the Justice Department.

The chairman decided not to do that, Mr. Mineta said, adding: "And I think that impacts on our credibility as an oversight agency. We're allowing them to pick and choose which laws they want to obey."

William J. Casey, Director of Central Intelligence, testifying before the committee this morning, accepted responsibility for the manual as the agency's head, committee members said. Mr. Boland said Mr. Casey had also assured the committee that he would order several managerial changes to avoid such problems in the future.

The manual was first made public in mid-October, and it caused a storm of protest from Congress and elsewhere. It was prepared by a C.I.A. contract employee in Honduras and was the result of a suggestion from Mr. Casey and other agency officials last spring that the Nicaraguan rebels needed instruction in guerrilla warfare, Mr. Boland said today.

The manual advised the rebels to kidnap Nicaraguan Government officials. It suggested hiring criminals who would arrange the killing of fellow rebels so they would become martyrs. It said ordinary Nicaraguan citizens should be blackmailed so they would be forced to join the rebel cause. And, in a section entitled "selective use of violence," the manual advised the rebels

to "neutralize selected Government officials," a phrase interpreted by rebel leaders and others to mean assassinate.

At first, Mr. Reagan said any C.I.A. officer found to be responsible for the

manual would be discharged. But after reading the C.I.A. inspector general's report, he concluded that the manual was "much ado about nothing."

The C.I.A. offered no comment today.